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26th of September, 1814, at the age of 73, leaving a widow and three children to unite their sorrow with that of his country, and to derive from its sympathy the truest consolation, that can be experienced for the loss of departed worth*.

* * *

CRITICISM.

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COLL GWYNFA: *or* PARADISE LOST translated into WELSH by
W. O. PUGHE. 8vo. pp. 371. 8s. E. Williams, 1819.

THE fame of Milton has long ceased to be at the mercy of time. It has, for ages, become one of the brightest possessions of eternity, as far, at least, as that term may be applied to the renown of this world. In no language does there exist a nobler specimen of the union of learning and genius,—of the pomp and dignity of the former and the luxuriance and sublimity of the latter,—than is afforded by PARADISE LOST. Its very blemishes result from the exuberance of its author's knowledge; and its beauties are such as his towering fancy could alone have created. It was Milton too, be it remembered, that made the first successful effort to liberate the English Muse from the bondage of rhyme. He first taught her to exchange her monkish frippery for a more sober and a more classical attire †. He also taught his native language itself to soar to a higher point in the scale of poetical excellence; he intermixed with her homely phraseology the polished idioms of more cultivated tongues, and engrafted upon her comparatively naked stock a variety of choice exotics from the genial climes of Rome and of Athens. To the valuable stores,

* A very appropriate tribute was paid, on this melancholy event, by the Gwyneddigion Society to the memory of one, whom they had so many reasons for styling their "Father." All the members appeared in deep mourning,—their silent harp was covered with black crape, and an affecting dirge, composed on the occasion by Mr. John Jones, then bard to the Society, prepared all present to participate with still deeper emotion in the mournful solemnity.

† It is not intended by this assertion to insinuate, that Milton was the first English poet who wrote in blank verse, but only, that he was the first to make a successful use of it. The earliest English composition of this nature was a Translation of the second and fourth books of the *Æneis* by Lord Surry, in 1557. See Warton's *History of English Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 21.

with which his classical learning thus supplied him, he likewise added others, which he readily derived from a familiar acquaintance with the most admired productions of modern Italy. It was hence, in all probability, that he learned to give to his verse that melody of construction, which a poetical ear cannot fail to discover. Thus, by his adoption of many foreign words, by a new combination in the mechanism of his sentences, and by a more musical metre, the English language acquired in his hands an accession both of strength and of ornament, to which it had been before unaccustomed :

Miraturque novas frondes, et non sua poma.

The few preceding remarks appeared to be in some degree necessary, to remind the reader of the difficulty, that must naturally accompany any attempt to translate a writer so variously and so learnedly gifted, and of whom it may emphatically be said, with reference to his greatest work, that, as his theme was divine, so his song was equal with his theme.

It must not be deemed surprising, however, that, notwithstanding these discouraging obstacles, endeavours should have been made to naturalize the sublime poem of *Paradise Lost* in most of the modern languages of Europe. Germany, Holland, Portugal, France and Italy have alike aimed at this honour. With respect to the former two, it will readily be imagined, that the harshness of the Teutonic dialects was found far from being congenial with the dignity, and, it may even be said, the splendour of the original. Whatever advantage, therefore, the German and Dutch translators may have acquired over the English poet in force of expression, if, indeed, there was a chance of superiority there, they must have lost in their efforts to emulate the studied harmony of his metrical cadences, and the classical richness of his style. The Portuguese language again, so little adapted as it has been to the higher strains of poetry, may well be pardoned for having failed to pourtray, in any remarkable manner, the excellence of the English epic.

On the French translators it can hardly be requisite to offer any remark. From a prudent regard to the infirmity of their vernacular tongue, so unequal to the bolder flights of imagination, they have not ventured, for the most part, to give their versions a poetical dress. Conscious of the justice of Voltaire's satirical observation, that his countrymen wanted an epic head, they felt, at the same time, that they were also in want of an epic language.

The Italians alone seem to have succeeded in their attempts to seize, in any considerable degree, the spirit of their great prototype; and, if they have not equalled him in the diversified energy of his metrical pauses, they have perhaps surpassed him in the softness and melliflence of their verse. But even for this advantage, if indeed a monotonous sweetness deserve the name, they must have been indebted more to the musical qualities of their language than to any superiority of poetical art. The Italian versions, however, are for the most part pretty accurate copies of the original both in spirit and metre; and it may be noticed, that a certain affinity in the accentuation of the two languages afforded, in the latter instance, every opportunity for success*.

From this cursory view of the continental translations it is now time to turn to that, which has given occasion to the foregoing remarks; and to a Cambro-Briton the task can not but be one of delight and of exultation.

It is certainly a matter of surprise, that, of the numerous English classics, and particularly the poets, no one of any eminence should, until now, have made its appearance in a Welsh dress. It was reserved for the celebrated author of our national dictionary to open one path as successfully as he had closed another,—for him, who had given us a Johnson, to make Milton our own. And the masterly style, in which he has achieved this last performance, merits the gratitude, as it must undoubtedly receive the praise, of his country. For the felicity of the execution will be allowed by all competent and unprejudiced judges to be in proportion with the novelty of the design.

Nor does this novelty consist only in the attempt to translate into Welsh the most sublime and, perhaps, the most difficult of

* The Latin translations of *PARADISE LOST* are here passed without notice, not because they possess no merit, but because a comparison between the living and dead languages can not, in this case, be fairly made. Besides, however excellent a Latin or Greek version may be in its way, there is still such a want of originality, such a servile mimicry of the antient writers in all modern productions of this description, as can not fail to be unsatisfactory to every person of true poetical feeling. The following is the commencement of Dr. Trapp's Translation of *PARADISE LOST*:—

“ Primum hominis lapsus vetitâque ex arbore fructus
 Avulsos, quorum è gustu lethale venenum
 Mortem, atque omne malum, quo plectimur, intulit orbi;
 Amissâ Edenâ, donec nos asserat horto
 Unus homo major redimens, sedique beatæ;
 Cœlestis cane Musa, ———

English poems. It embraces moreover an endeavour, most successfully accomplished, to adapt the Welsh language to the metre of the original. It may not be generally known out of Wales, that the poetry of that country, as far as its metrical harmony is concerned, is founded on principles exclusively its own. Comprising, as it does, in its four-and-twenty metres, every variety of verse known to antient or modern Europe, it still adapts them to a certain law unknown to all other countries. This, in the language of Wales, is styled *CYNGHANEDD*, which consists in a certain correspondent alliteration of words with reference to their rhythmical symphony. Upon a skilful observance of this principle the beauties of Welsh verse mainly depend. It was established as a constituent part of it as early as the ninth century, since which time it has hitherto continued, though greatly modified and improved, to be considered as indispensable to its formation.

From what has been above said it will be inferred, that the English heroic verse is not unknown to the Welsh poets: but, divested of the peculiarity just noticed, it must be regarded as a novelty. And, when the disadvantage of writing in a metre, stripped of its natural aids, is duly considered, the merit of Mr. Pughe's performance can not fail to be enhanced. Nothing but the natural vigour and buoyancy of our noble language, and his masterly management of it, could have raised it superior to such an obstacle. But this is not all: he has not merely surmounted this difficulty, but has been most happy in imitating the harmonious mechanism of the original, as will be evident by a comparison of many of those passages, in which Milton's great skill in that respect is most conspicuous. In a word, Mr. Pughe's countrymen must feel truly grateful to him for thus proving most satisfactorily, that the Welsh, even when shorn of its own poetical beams, is not only equal in energy and in majesty to the English, but is far more expressive and more harmonious. And, it should farther be observed, that our translator has, with much judgment, availed himself of the several dialects of the Welsh tongue, to give to his work that copiousness and variety, for which the English bard felt himself obliged to have recourse to the assistance of foreign languages.

The exordium of *Paradise Lost* is here selected to prove, in some degree, the justice of what has been now asserted, not indeed because it furnishes the best instance that might be selected, but because, being so well known to all English readers,

it will render the transcribing of the original in a great measure unnecessary.

“ Am drosedd Dyn, ac aeron teg y pren
Yn waharddedig, idd y byd ei flas
A ddysgai angeu, a phob echrys wae,
Gan golli Eden, nes adferer ni,
Trwy un mwy Dyn, a mōddu y fro gain,
O cana Awen nefawl, hon oddiar
Ben Horeb, neu o gwmwl Sinai ddu,
A roddit idd y bugel hwnw ddawn,
A ddysgai gyntaf y dewisawl had
I wybod, yn y dechreu fal y daeth
Y byd o Dryblith* dwys : Neu os i ti
Tirionach mynydd Sion ac wrth ffrwd
Silōa hon à rêd ger gwyddfa Duw :
Oddiyno anfon nawdd i gân mor hy,
O fryd anturiaw nid ar isel hynt
Uwch holl orseddau awenyddion ail †,
Tra synio am newyddion bethau gwiw.
Yn bênaf Ti, O Ysryd Gwir, à wyt
O flaen pob teml yn dewis calon lân,
Addysga fi, o herwydd gwyddiad wyt;
Cynnrychawl odd y cyntaf oeddit Ti,
A chan amledu dy adenydd gwrdd,
Mal y golomen, ar y dyfnder mawr
Eisteddit, a dêorai iddo hil :
Hyn ynnof dywyll sydd yn oleu gwna,
Derchafa hyn sy wael; trwy hawl mor fawr
Yr hònwyf drefn Rhagluniaeth erioed a byth,
A chyfiawnâu i ddynion lwybrau Duw.”

No one, conversant with the Welsh language, can fail to appreciate the merits of this passage, and especially of the last eleven lines, beginning, in the English, with

“ But chiefly thou, O Spirit that dost prefer.”

Let us compare Mr. Pughe's version with the Italian translation by Paolo Rolli of the same lines. It is thus he renders them.

* “ *Tryblith*.]—Chaos, neu Cymysg, ydoedd yr enw gan y Groegiaid idd y ddaiar, pan oedd afluniaidd, cyn y crëad.”

† “ Neu, *Uwch i orseddfa awenyddion Gryw*.]—Bæotia, talaeth o ddr Gryw, à elwid hefyd *Aonia*, neu wlad yr *Awen*; ac yno safai moel *Helicon* lle, meddynt, yr ymorseddai yr *Aonides* neu yr *Awenyddion*: ac o hyny yr enwid *Aonian Mount* yn y ganiad hon.”

“ Principalmente o tu Spirito, che a tempïi
 Tutti anteponi un retto e puro cuore,
 Istruiscimi tu, perche tu sai,
 E dal principio essendo tu presente ;
 Giacesti con possenti ale distese
 Qual colomba, a covar su'l vasto abisso,
 E pregnante il facesti : or tu rischiara
 Quanto è d'oscuro in me ; tu quel, ch' è umile,
 In alto lieva e ve'l sostini, ond' Io,
 Al sommo d'un così grande argomento,
 Possa asserir la Provvidenza eterna,
 E all' Uom le vie giustificar di Dio.”

No person, even moderately acquainted with the two languages, can hesitate where to bestow the preference. The Welsh translator has not only equalled the Italian in the melody of his verse, but has an abundant advantage in the force and variety of his cadences. To compare the Welsh with the Italian in melody may appear a species of arrogance to the admirers of the latter tongue. But it is a fact beyond dispute, that our native language is capable of as soft and as sweet a combination as the Italian. With a far richer store of vocal sounds, it makes a less frequent use of the dental or hard consonants, as may be fully illustrated by a comparison of the lines here quoted. Indeed the whole passage, extracted from Mr. Pughe's Translation, bears testimony to the fact. Nothing can be sweeter than the first six lines:—and of these the fifth and sixth are particularly so. But the work abounds in examples of this sort, some of which will be noticed hereafter.

It would be a task of too much time to dwell now on all the beauties of *COLL GWYNFA*. It shall be the business, however, of a future number to enter into a more minute examination of its most prominent features. All, that has been attempted on the present occasion, is a survey of its general characteristics ; and, if the language of praise alone has been adopted, it has been because no other could be conscientiously used. The merit of the undertaking was of itself sufficient to call for it ; and when to this are added the judiciousness of the design, and the skill evinced in the execution, what alternative has a critic, with reference to the general character of the work, but panegyric ?

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